

047: What Happens When We Die?

(based on Ch. 5 in *The Savior of All Men*)

My dad died a few years ago, and I miss him greatly.

- Of course, my mom misses him tremendously; they had been happily married for fifty-six years when Dad passed.
- It is quite common for my mom to let folks know that Dad is in Heaven, for he was a believer, and she often wonders what he is doing there.
- Is he getting caught up with friends and loved ones who preceded him in death?
- Is He sitting on the lap of Jesus or dining with Him?
- Does he know what we are doing here on Earth?
- Sometimes, Christians find comfort in assuming their loved one is in Heaven, in the presence of Jesus.
- But what about those whose loved one was not a believer?
- The speculation is not so pleasant and, oftentimes, quite troubling.

But is any of this biblical?

- Let's begin with an easier question to answer:
- After the rapture, where will we dwell in the following age?
- Unfaithful believers will be consigned to the millennial earth, while faithful believers will inherit a place in the city of reward, New Jerusalem, which will hover over the millennial earth.
- What happens after the Millennium?
- All will dwell on the new earth that God creates, for God will come down from Heaven to dwell on Earth with mankind (Rev. 21:3).
- Will we ever live in the third Heaven, the place of God's dwelling?

- No! The streets of gold and gates of pearl, etc., are not in Heaven; they are in New Jerusalem, that will be connected with Earth (presumably, in the manner that the moon is connected with Earth, but much closer and much grander).

Commentator Arlen Chitwood says:

- "When the Millennium or the eternal ages are in view, it's not even Biblical to talk about going to heaven ... The Biblical picture has to do with redeemed man exercising regality in relation to this earth ... Man's creation, his fall, and the purpose surrounding his salvation all center around regality. And this regality will be realized in Christ's kingdom over the present earth during the Millennium and from the new earth out into the heavens in the whole of the universe during the eternal ages which follow."

In the future, after the rapture, believers will *not* live in Heaven, the place of God's dwelling, as is so commonly taught and sung about in our hymns.

- That raises an important question.
- Where do we go when we die while awaiting the rapture and Judgment Seat of Christ?
- That question will be answered as this episode unfolds.
- The most common answer given by evangelical Christianity is known as the *Intermediate State*.
- Most Protestants, Baptists, and Eastern Orthodox teach that the Intermediate State is a "disembodied foretaste of the final state."
- The body goes in the grave, but the souls of believers go to Heaven, where they experience joy and rest while they await the resurrection.

- Unbelievers experience the torment of their soul in Hell (or Hades, as some prefer to call it) while awaiting final condemnation on the day of resurrection and judgment.

The Roman Catholic position is similar, but includes purgatory for some.

- From our human perspective, we find great comfort imagining our deceased loved ones in the presence of Jesus, enjoying the glories of heaven.
- We think they are so much better off than we are on this old wicked earth.
- Of course, the sorrow and agony of a loved one burning in hell brings no relief.
- Could this traditional perspective be wrong?
- I believe it is.
- Most Christians are unaware that the *Intermediate State* position began with Augustine.
- Calvinist minister and professor Anthony Hoekema said, “Since Augustine, Christians have believed that the souls of those who die either rest peacefully, in the case of Christians, or are afflicted, in the case of the damned, after death until the resurrection.”

The Westminster Confession summarizes the position as follows:

- “The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption: but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them: the souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies.

- “And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Beside these two places, for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledges none.”

This view poses some problems.

- If the souls of deceased believers go to Heaven *now* (the place of God’s dwelling), then they are sent there before being judged.
- At the future Judgment Seat of Christ, they will be removed and sent to their Millennial place of reward, according to their verdict — either to New Jerusalem or the darkness outside (Earth).
- Why would God allow anyone to live in Heaven after death, only to later remove them, particularly if they receive a negative verdict?

Here’s a bigger problem:

- If the souls of unbelievers go to Hell now, then they suffer torment even before they are judged.
- Why would God remove them from Hell, simply to judge them at His Great White Throne, and then send them right back to Hell?
- Not to mention, what is the purpose of resurrection of the body?
- If souls can function just fine in Heaven or Hell, then why not leave them there?
- There is no need for resurrection.
- This conundrum has caused some to study the Scriptures and question whether the traditional view is correct.

Another view that is worthy of consideration and to which I now subscribe is best introduced by illustrating it.

- The other night I went to bed around 11:00 pm.
- I was awakened with a start by the loud barking of a bass-voiced dog near my window — a neighborhood stray.
- My instant thought was, “I’ve just fallen to sleep. Leave me alone, dog!”
- But I was quite surprised to look over at my alarm clock and see the time: 5:00 am!
- I had been sleeping soundly for six hours, but it seemed to me as if I had just laid my head on the pillow and closed my eyes.
- Could it be that in the everyday habit of sleeping and waking God has given us a beautiful picture of death and resurrection?

A well-written Wikipedia article on the subject, which quotes several theologians, says:

- “A minority of Christians, including William Tyndale, Martin Luther, E. W. Bullinger, and a number of others, deny the conscious existence of the soul after death, believing the intermediate state of the dead to be unconscious “sleep.”
- “In this case, the person is not conscious of any time or activity and would not be aware even if centuries elapsed between their death and their resurrection. They would, upon their death, cease consciousness, and gain it again at the time of the resurrection having experienced no time lapse. For them, time would thus be suspended, as if they moved immediately from death to resurrection and the General Judgment of the Judgment Day.”

This is the position to which I now hold, after several years of Scripture study.

- The neutral term for this view is: Christian Mortalism.

- It was attacked by John Calvin (a follower of Augustine), who dubbed the pejorative term “soul sleep.”
- In numerous places the Bible refers to death as sleeping and resurrection as waking.
- For example, Jesus said in John 11:11, “Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.”
- Under the prevailing view, Lazarus would have died and gone to Heaven — or at least to Abraham’s bosom or Paradise.
- If that were truly the case, wouldn’t it have been a let-down for Lazarus to be resurrected and have to return to Earth?
- If that, indeed, happened, then wouldn’t Lazarus surely have talked about the glories of Heaven?
- Yet there is no record of that in the Gospels.
- *Sleep* is the metaphor that the NT uses repeatedly for those who have died.

Listen to these Bible verses that refer to death as *sleeping*:

- Matt. 27:52 and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;
- Acts 7:60 Then he (Stephen) knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.
- Acts 13:36 David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption;
- 1 Cor. 11:30 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.
- 1 Cor. 15:6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.
- 1 Cor. 15:18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

1 Cor. 15:20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

- 1 Cor. 15:51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.
- 1 Thess. 4:13-15 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

If believers go to Heaven when they die, then why are they repeatedly described as being asleep?

- Opponents of this view say the Bible refers to the dead as sleeping because they merely *appear* to be sleeping, though they are not actually asleep.
- However, that explanation discounts the purpose for the metaphor.
- The biblical writers did not use this metaphor to suggest the person was asleep in the casket but wide awake in another realm, such as Heaven.
- The metaphor is designed to picture a dead body that has temporarily fallen asleep but will awaken at the resurrection!
- The sleeping metaphor is quite clear as to its meaning.

According to the Christian Mortalism position to which I now hold, what happens when we die?

- I would suggest that it is the reverse of what happened to Adam, when God brought him to life.

- Gen. 2:7 The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (i.e., soul, KJV)
- Did Adam have personality at that point?
- Yes! Adam clearly had a soul — mind, will, and emotions.
- God put Adam in the Garden and gave him responsibilities.
- That requires communication, and communication requires personality.
- Furthermore, Adam had to make decisions.
- He even had feelings — obvious feelings of love for God and for Eve, and feelings of guilt after he fell.
- After all, He was made in God’s image!
- The point is that when God breathed into Adam the breath of life, he was a functioning human with a soul.

What happens when we die?

- The exact opposite of what God did to bring Adam to life.
- God removes the breath of life, and man ceases to be a living being.
- Presumably, that affects not merely man’s body, but also his soul, as it did when man was created.
- Breath of life from God results in an animated body (call it *life*), and that includes personality or soul.
- Removal of the breath of life by God results in a dead body (i.e., no life), and that includes personality or soul.
- From this biblical illustration we deduce that man’s soul is not immortal until the resurrection, when believers will receive a resurrected body.
- Paul clarifies that in 1 Cor. 15:53-54.
- This mortal will put on immortality (“deathlessness”) and this corruptible will put on incorruption (“endless existence”).

The Intermediate State view suggests that man's soul is immortal — it lives on in Heaven while the body is in the grave — even though it hasn't been resurrected by God.

- But there is another huge problem with that position.
- Immortality of the soul is not a biblical teaching; it comes from Greek philosophy.
- This is confirmed by Dr. Archie Wright, in his book, *The Origin of Evil Spirits*:
- "There was a singular concept of what happens to the soul upon the death of an individual beginning as early as the fifth century B.C.E. in some Greek philosophical circles ... Plato and Socrates. If the person had remained virtuous, he or she had the opportunity to return to the place of the gods ... Those individuals who stain themselves with sin return to another life in the body. However, it was generally thought that the soul was capable of existing on its own in a realm apart from the material world."

Wright is saying that the immortality of the soul originated in Greek philosophy.

- Plato and Socrates lived long before Christ, during the intertestamental period.
- Immortality of the soul was taught by Augustine and later became the position of the Reformers.
- Immortality of the soul is *not* taught in the Old Testament.
- According to the Old Testament, at death the body goes to Sheol, the place of the dead.
- Sheol has no connection with Heaven or Hell – it is simply the place of the dead.
- We need to reject the intrusions of Greek philosophy in our biblical understanding

Individuals come to life when God breathes into them His breath of life at conception — formed with an inherent soul or personality that develops throughout life.

- When that person dies, what happens metaphysically is that God removes the breath of life, so that they cease to exist — their body and soul fall asleep until the resurrection, when God breathes new life into them, thereby reanimating them.
- Sleep imagery was also used in the Old Testament, referring to resurrection:
- Isa. 26:19 Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.
- Dan. 12:2 Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.

There is something troubling for the intermediate state view in 1 Tim. 6:13-16

- Paul says to Timothy:
- I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ ... that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality ... whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.
- Verse 16 teaches that no one is immortal, except for God.

In the Intermediate State view, the soul is viewed as being immortal.

- But is that correct? Notice the statement in v. 16: “whom no man has seen or can see.”
- According to the Bible, the soul is not immortal. It seems that when the body dies, the soul becomes unconscious as the person *sleeps* – until the resurrection.
- Eccl. 9:5 For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten.
- Ps. 146:4 His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans (literally, thoughts) perish.

Some are very concerned about the prospect of what they pejoratively refer to as “soul sleep” — the idea that, after death, the body and soul fall asleep and remain in that state until resurrected.

- But from the perspective of the person who has died — i.e., who is “sleeping” — they fall asleep in death one moment and wake up in resurrection in the next.
- In other words, for those who have died, the resurrection seems instantaneous — like waking up after going to sleep at night.
- They close their eyes; the next thing they know, it is morning (resurrection!).
- But it could actually be centuries or even millennia of time from our earthly perspective.

The tendency of many theologians is to assume the waking in the next life is instantaneous with respect to our time here on Earth.

- Some instantly go to Heaven and some instantly go to Hell, they say.
- But that is thinking according to our human perspective.
- We think of everything in terms of time, for that is how we have been made — we exist within time.

- When a person dies, they are released from time as we know it on Earth.
- In the resurrection, they are reinfused with God’s breath of life and receive an immortal body (1 Cor. 15:53).

In support of this view is the classic rapture passage by Paul:

- 1 Thess. 4:13-15 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

Notice that three times Paul refers to death as *sleeping*.

- His purpose in teaching about the rapture is to comfort those whose believing loved ones had died.
- Those who were still living thought there was no more hope for their deceased loved ones.
- Paul encourages them with the thought that they will rise again.
- What great news!
- Remarkably, Paul does not say, “Don’t worry about your loved ones; they are already in the presence of Jesus!”
- Wouldn’t that have been the greatest comfort He could give, if it were true?
- But Paul never says anything like that.
- Instead, he says, “Don’t worry about your loved ones; they will one day be resurrected to be with Jesus — and so will you.”
- Is this not compelling evidence *against* the view that when people die, they instantly go to Heaven or Hell?

Let's now look at some of the passages that Bible students typically quote in their attempt to defend the traditional Intermediate State view.

- 2 Cor. 5:6, 8 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord ... We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.
- "Absent from the body, present with the Lord."
- This is virtually always used as a cliché, ignoring the context.
- What is the context?
- Nobody knows when I ask.
- But let's look at the verse in its context:

2 Cor. 4:8-15

- 8-10 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.
- 11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.
- 12 So then death is working in us, but life in you.
- 13-14 And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you.
- 15 For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

In the context, Paul is talking about suffering for Jesus that will bring glory to God when he is resurrected.

- So the context of this entire passage is about being resurrected to meet Jesus.
- The passage continues:
- 2 Cor. 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.
- 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

Clearly, Paul is talking about earning eternal rewards.

- 2 Cor. 4:18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.
- 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.
- 5:2-3 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.
- This "habitation which is from heaven" is a glorified body that covers believers so they will not be naked and ashamed in the age to come.

That is the context. But now notice the culmination of the passage.

- 2 Cor. 5:4-10
- 4 For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.

- 5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.
- 6 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.
- 7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.
- 8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.
- 9 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.
- 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Most tend to extract a phrase from this text and use it like a cliché — “absent from the body, present with the Lord.”

- But Paul is not talking about dying and instantly being in the presence of Jesus.
- He is talking about the coming resurrection and being found worthy of reward and a glorified body so that he is not naked and ashamed.
- The entire context is resurrection and Judgment Seat of Christ.
- Somehow, we miss that by taking out of context one little phrase and making it mean what we want it to mean!

A second text used in objection is found in Phil 1:

- Phil. 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.
- 22 But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.
- 23 For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

- Again, many extract phrases from these verses to support the position of the intermediate state.
- But what is the context?
- Phil. 1:20 according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.
- Paul is talking about *not* being ashamed and having boldness when giving his account at the Judgment Seat of Christ.
- To that end, he wants Jesus to be magnified in his life.

To live for Jesus is Paul’s passion; to die as a martyr would be gain.

- He wants to remain with the church so he can continue to disciple the folks and bear fruit for Jesus.
- But dying as a martyr would lead to greater reward in the resurrection at the Judgment Seat of Christ.
- He could die here, and be relieved of suffering, but the next thing he would be aware of is being resurrected in the presence of Jesus.
- Could it be that the famous proof texts for defending the Intermediate State position are really only phrases that have been taken out of context and made into clichés to support the view?

A third passage that is often used to defend the Intermediate State position is found in the Gospels.

- Luke 23:43 Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”
- Two outlaws are hanging on crosses, one on each side of Jesus.
- One of them blasphemes, challenging Jesus to save Himself.

- The other outlaw rebukes the blasphemer:
- “Don’t you fear God? We deserve our punishment; we had it coming. But this man has done nothing wrong.”
- He defends Christ’s innocence and sinlessness.
- This criminal recognizes he has lived a deplorable life.
- He is a lawbreaker and repents of his sins.

Typically, this passage is preached — incorrectly, I believe — as a salvation (regeneration) text.

- Nevertheless, that interpretation does not fit the broader context of the Gospels.
- This man is a believer in an Old Testament sense.
- He obviously fears Jehovah God (v. 40).
- He also apparently believes Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God who alone can forgive sin (v. 41).
- He confesses Christ, which is a work that results in reward.
- His request for Jesus to remember him in the kingdom (v. 42) is not a prayer to be saved.
- He wants to be included in the kingdom of heaven, the heavenly New Jerusalem.
- So he cries out: “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom” (Luke 23:42).

This man wants to be a kingdom inheritor in the New Jerusalem.

- Jesus graciously replies: “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43).
- Bullinger points out that there is no punctuation in the Greek manuscripts.
- Thus, the phrase, “I say to you today,” is to be kept together and not separated by a comma in English.
- He suggests there is an *incorrect* way of reading this statement and a *correct* way:

- Incorrect: “I say to you (comma), today you will be with Me in Paradise.”
- By placing the comma after *you*, the emphasis is on *today*.
- Correct: “I say to you today (comma), you will be with Me in Paradise.”
- By placing the comma before *you*, the emphasis is on *will be*.
- Jesus is *not* saying that *on that very day* the thief would be with Him in Paradise (which most interpret as Heaven).
- Remember — the thief is asking about inheritance in the kingdom, which will be launched at Christ’s second coming.

Bullinger also points out that the phrase, *I say to you today* (or *this day*) is “a solemn idiom, used for great emphasis.

- It occurs forty-two times in the book of Deuteronomy. It is this Old Testament idiom in Luke 23:43.”
- Incidentally, there is no evidence in the Scriptures that Paradise is Heaven.
- That is merely an assumption made by traditionalists.
- Paradise is likely the past Garden of Eden — where the Tree of Life was located (Gen. 2:9; 3:22,24) — and the future New Jerusalem — where the Tree of Life will be located (Rev. 2:7; 22:2,14).
- So when Jesus promises this man He will be in Paradise, it is a promise that he will one day be an inheritor in the New Jerusalem — on the basis that he confessed Christ before men.

Jesus essentially pronounces this man’s Judgment Seat verdict while he is still living.

- What a wonderful blessing this repentant thief receives!

- What about you? Have you repented of your sins and turned back to Jesus in obedience?
- Have you confessed Jesus before men?
- Luke 12:8-9 Jesus said, “Whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.”

That leads to a fourth passage that is often used to defend the Intermediate State position:

- 2 Cor. 12:2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven ... into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.
- Paul was given a glimpse of the third heaven.
- But that is certainly not normal, and he wasn’t dead when it happened.
- Thus, this text cannot be used to support the Intermediate State position.

A fifth passage in the book of Revelation is often used to defend the Intermediate State:

- Rev. 6:9 When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.
- 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”
- 11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants

and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

This passage is about the martyrs, who become saved in the early years of the Tribulation, confess Christ faithfully, and refuse to take the mark of the beast.

- They are killed by Antichrist.
- In fact, John’s mention of their “souls” may be a metaphoric reference to their life-blood, spilled by Antichrist, perhaps even on the altar in the Temple at Jerusalem.
- Could this be the *abomination of desolation*, spoken of by Jesus and Daniel the prophet?
- Apparently, these martyrs are resurrected and go straight to Heaven.

This text cannot be used to suggest that when we die — as believers, in this present age — our souls go to Heaven.

- It is important to remember that these martyrs die during the Tribulation, which is presumably the time after the rapture when all of the church-age believers are already in some realm of Heaven being judged by Jesus at the Judgment Seat of Christ.
- If that is where these souls are — which appears to be the case, seeing they are speaking to the Lord — they are there for the same purpose as other believers, and that is to be judged.
- For them, the judgment is positive, because they have confessed Christ and, consequently, are rewarded with white robes, which implies two things.

First, they are not mere souls, but resurrected bodies, for they are wearing robes.

- Second, this implies they are ready for and awaiting their future assignment as faithful rulers in the millennial age.
- In fact, they are eager to move on to their New Jerusalem assignment, and that seems to be why they are eager for God to avenge their blood, which is a plea for Him to return to Earth the second time and defeat the beast and the false prophet at the Battle of Armageddon.
- Again, this text cannot be used to defend the Intermediate State, for it occurs after this present church-age has ended.

I had one man say to me in an email, “Thanks so much for your responses.”

- Your answers to those verses mentioned are in agreement with Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah Witnesses and the Worldwide Church of God founded by Herbert W. Armstrong.”
- Here’s how I responded:
- “Thanks _____, but for the record, I don't worry myself with what the Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, or Worldwide Church of God people believe.
- I concern myself only with the Scriptures.
- Those cults may, indeed, have some elements of truth mixed in with all their error, and we would certainly agree with the truth while rejecting the error.

I think that very well could be the case with soul sleep.

- “Of course, we have many points of overlap with Roman Catholicism (virgin birth, blood atonement, deity of Christ, etc.) though we reject their belief system overall which is fraught with error.
- Thus, I think the reference to the cults in our discussions about these matters is an ad hominem-type of argument,

that is intended to make me look bad and cult-like — a sort of guilt by association.

- But that's not fair, and thinking people will quickly reject it as invalid.”
- The sixth and final passage typically used to defend the Intermediate State position is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16.
- I will dedicate the next two episodes to explaining this text.

Here’s the bottom line, in my opinion.

- The Intermediate State position minimizes the importance of the resurrection, essentially making it unnecessary.
- The Christian Mortality view maximizes the importance of the resurrection, making it primary.
- 1 Cor. 15:16-18 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.
- I challenge you to Think on These Things!